

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND
FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 544

**LD TITLE: An Act To Give Certain Landowners First Priority for
Antlerless Deer Permits**

Presented by Representative BRIGGS of Mexico. (BY REQUEST)

**Cosponsored by Senator JACKSON of Aroostook and
Representatives: AYOTTE of Caswell, DAVIS of Sangerville,
PETERSON of Rumford.**

DATE OF HEARING: March 12, 2013

Good afternoon Senator Dutremble, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Jim Connolly, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST L.D. 544.

L.D. 544 amends the current antlerless deer hunting permit system to require that all antlerless deer permits available in a wildlife management district be issued to landowners who own at least 25 contiguous acres of land open to hunting by the public and have applied for the permit.

It also provides that if the number of available antlerless deer permits in a wildlife management district exceeds the number of eligible landowner applications, the remaining permits must be issued to junior hunters who have applied for an antlerless deer permit in that district.

Maine's deer population is a fixed size; there are a definite number of deer living in Maine. The size of Maine's deer population is regulated, in part, by the number of doe deer killed by the various forms of hunting. The department attempts to control the number of doe deer killed within a range that will allow the department to meet its deer population management objectives throughout the state. This means that each year only a specific number of doe deer can be killed by all means of deer hunting. This also means only a specific number of doe permits can be issued. This bill would take antlerless deer

permits away from regular applicants, veterans and seniors to give them to some landowners and junior hunters. From a biological standpoint it doesn't make a difference which individual kills the deer as long as it is done by a licensed hunter and then registered. However, any of these moves to reallocate permits weakens public support for what is a valuable wildlife management tool. Each time these changes are made the department receives calls from individuals affected by the change who are now unhappy and react by withdrawing their support for hunting and/or the department. In the end it is a social decision that has the ability to affect the deer management system.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.